

Sends Letter to Administration Seeking Additional Health Care Services for Louisianians
May 19, 2010

WASHINGTON D.C. – Today, U.S. Congressman Charlie Melancon (LA-03) sent a letter to the Administration requesting temporary health care clinics to serve volunteers and workers in south Louisiana who have been impacted by the Deepwater Horizon oil disaster. The clinics would provide medical checkups to people who have come in contact with the oil and assist in monitoring the health effects of the oil leak on south Louisianians.

In his letter to Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, head of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Congressman Melancon wrote, **“Many residents and volunteers are being exposed to hazardous materials on a daily basis, and some will have to travel hours to get treatment at the nearest health care facility. It is imperative that temporary health care clinics be established to provide basic health care services in this geographic area.”**

Congressman Melancon also requested that Secretary Sebelius appoint a health care coordinator to oversee and streamline the health care response from the public and private sector.

“One of the most important lessons we have learned post-Katrina is the need for coordination of relief and volunteer efforts, and staff from your office would most appropriately fill that role,” Congressman Melancon wrote.

In his letter, Congressman Melancon reiterated that BP should be held responsible for all costs for the recovery, including the additional health care services for south Louisiana.

“While I am requesting your assistance, I believe that BP and other companies involved should ultimately bear the costs of organizing and providing these health care services. It is the companies’ responsibility and theirs alone in light of their negligence in this situation.”

[Click here](#) to read Congressman Melancon’s letter to Secretary Sebelius.

Congressman Melancon represents the areas of coastal Louisiana most directly affected by the oil leak, including Plaquemines, St. Bernard, Terrebonne, Lafourche and southern Jefferson Parishes. The Deepwater Horizon platform was located 50 miles off the coast of Louisiana’s Third Congressional District.

Congressman Melancon has been leading efforts in Louisiana to coordinate the response to the oil leak caused by the explosion on the Deepwater Horizon oil platform one month ago. Last weekend, Congressman Melancon visited the Houma Incident Command Post in Terrebonne Parish and met with U.S. Coast Guard Captain Edwin Stanton, the Federal Coordinating Officer for the disaster. He has also met with Terrebonne and Lafourche Parish officials and been briefed on their plans for boom deployment and other protective measures to prevent the oil sheen from damaging their coastal marshes.

Recently, Congressman Melancon [traveled with a bipartisan delegation of Energy and Commerce Committee](#) members visiting south Louisiana to investigate the oil leak and evaluate the response and containment efforts.

Congressman Melancon has also held a town hall in Chalmette to listen to constituent concerns about the oil leak disaster in the Gulf of Mexico and provide information about the response efforts. Representatives from the Coast Guard, BP, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Louisiana State University, Louisiana's seafood industry, and St. Bernard Parish officials took part in the town hall to help answer questions and listen to concerns.

Congressman Melancon has been working closely with parish and federal officials to monitor response efforts and provide assistance where needed. He toured by boat the [coastal marshes in St. Bernard Parish](#) with parish officials and viewed the efforts of local fishermen to deploy boom. Over one million feet of protective boom have been deployed to protect Louisiana's fragile coastal marshes from the oil slick.

In his conversations with local fishermen and parish officials involved in laying the boom, Congressman Melancon learned they face a severe shortage in boom material, hindering their ability to protect the coast. In response, Congressman Melancon [sent a letter to President Barack Obama](#) requesting military aircraft be used to help bring protective boom to the Gulf Coast more quickly. The President granted his request and last week the first Air Force aircraft arrived in Belle Chasse with additional boom.

Congressman Melancon has also been working to minimize the economic impact of the oil leak on Louisiana's seafood industry. On April 29th, the Congressman contacted the Secretary of Commerce and the head of NOAA's Fisheries Service urging them to prepare to [direct disaster funding to Louisiana's commercial and recreational fishermen](#)

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[In his letter](#)

, Congressman Melancon noted that the oil intrusion resulting from the Deepwater Horizon oil rig disaster would likely damage the fragile habitats on which Louisiana's fishermen, oystermen, and shrimpers depend.

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